

THE
ASSIGNATION.

A
SENTIMENTAL NOVEL.
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N :

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M DCC LXXIV.



ASSISTANT

SENTIMENTAL NOVEL

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

LONDON:

Printed by T. and J. Norrish, at the
Court and Library of the British Museum,
and at the Office of the Stationer, Strand.

MDCCLXXIX

THE ASSIGNATION.

LETTER I.

Lord Charles Rainsford to Colonel Harcourt.

AH! my friend, may you never have occasion to practise the philosophy you preach! Believe me, that charming foundation for

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patience and resignation would vanish at the approach of affliction ;
“ and, like the baseless fabric of a
“ vision, leave not a wreck behind.”
Those common precepts suit not the
greatness of my loss. Resignation
and a bleeding heart are incompatible ; and he who is wounded with
a dart like this, must feel too much
to argue. No, my friend, at best
your medicine is but an opiate : it
may, for a time, lull me into insen-
sibility, blunt all the finer feelings
of the soul, but never, never shall
joy resume its abode in this break-
ing



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ing heart, a heart which shall ever
bear my Delia's image. I go, my
friend ; this gay metropolis ill suits
my grief : I fly to Bellmont.

“ For, alas ! where with her I have stray'd,

“ I can wander with pleasure alone.”

Pleasure ! --- Ah, no ; pleasure and
I, like childish friendships, were too
fond to continue long inseparable.
Oh ! I'll indulge this luxury of
grief !

“ And to the Nightingale's complaining notes,

“ Tune my distresses and rehearse my woes.”

The post has just brought me

B 2

your

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your letter. Cold, insensible man !
you never loved : a heart so callous
could never admit the animating
flame. And yet, from the rectitude
of your sentiments, from that uni-
versal benevolence, one should be
led to imagine the refining passion
had not always been a stranger to
your heart ; that heart so feelingly
awake to pity, so ready to relieve
the wants of the afflicted. Oh,
come my friend, come to Bellmont,
there we'll enjoy

“ The feast of Reason, and the flow of Soul.”

We'll

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We'll talk of Delia,

" For there's music in the name ;

" That, softening me to infant tenderness,

" Makes my heart spring like the first leaps of life."

CHARLES RAINSFORD.

B 3

LET-

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LETTER II.

Colonel *Harcourt* to Lord *Charles Rainsford*.

“ In the Press and will speedily be
“ published, as a relief for distress’d Ma-
“ caronies; A COLLECTION OF POEMS
“ FOR THE USE OF THE FAIR SEX,
“ by Lord *Charles Rainsford*.”

ON my word, thy last letter was
so entirely poetical, it deserves
to be eternally recorded in the an-
nals of gallantry, as a perfect model
for the love-lorn throng.

Prithee, Rainsford, whence didst
thou

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thou borrow those *moving* quotations? And is it then in rural retirement you hope to conquer this unfortunate passion? But you are right, my Lord: however unsuccessful the attempt, you will *there* find fewer witnesses of your folly. Yet why suffer your hours to languish in the gloom of anxiety? Why, with every grace of mind and person that can adorn and improve society, will you fly from man's best joys, the joys of social and convivial life; and, to brood o'er one disappointment, give up all other plea-

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fures? Fie, my Lord, are you not more inconsistent than the child who, deprived of the cake it cried for, refuses all other sustenance?

I called last night on Lady Beverly. She informs me the two Miss Montforts spend their winter in London, and make her house their home; and, as she has more room than her own family require, and has just purchased a new carriage, she shall be very glad to see them. "Besides," added she, "I have
" a great friendship for poor Mrs.
" Montfort, which I intend to de-
" mon-

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“monstrate by receiving her daughters: and a man of Colonel Harcourt’s sense cannot be so ignorant of the management of a family, as not to know that two young ladies are a great trouble and expence, and require additional attendants, and a more elegant table.”

Sure, Rainsford, this woman is constructed upon a very singular plan. She moves by clockwork: and yet who can deny her an unlimited multiplicity of ideas, since they are bounded but by the garret and

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the kitchen, or the most universal knowledge, of the rise and fall of fashions, and of the history of her family?

My intimacy with Harry Montfort requires that I should pay my respects to his sisters. In the mean time, as soon as I can dispatch some necessary business, I shall fly to Bellmont, and expect you will sacrifice your rivulets and groves to friendship. Return with me, my dear Rainsford; let me persuade you to revisit the gay metropolis; and

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and though we cannot abolish pain,
we will endeavour, in the modish
circle, to blunt sensibility.

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LETTER III.

Miss Montfort to Miss Sedley.

WELL, Fanny, notwithstanding my aunt Martha's unlucky omens, I am, thanks to my kind stars, safe in Brook Street. Would you believe it my friend? No adventure! A hundred miles from home, and no adventure! no knights errant! — Positively, my good aunt, it is true. — Indeed, all the *be* creatures I have seen, look rather as if they had been confined in enchanted castles, for the ladies amusement,
than

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than like the descendents of our warlike fires; and, instead of storming castles for our relief, they seem, by their more than female effeminacy, to throw themselves upon us for protection. Happily for them, there now exist no enchanters, nor, believe me, the bravest of our heroes would turn pale at the sight of a windmill.

Surely, Lucy, Gay had an insight into futurity when he wrote the Fable of the Monkey that had seen the world. The modish world appears

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pears peopled by such a race of animals.

This London is the strangest place! Such rounds of folly, visiting and cards, that *Vive la Bagatelle* is the reigning motto, and seems banded about from Hyde-park to White-chapel. And yet, my friend, so many solemn faces, you would swear they were in expectation of a general conflagration; and I, the flaming comet, destined to fire the world.—— Don't you think I improve, Fanny?

A.

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A ticket for the ridotto. — Now for hair-dressers, milleners, and a long train of etceteras. Lady Beverly (the drollest original) summons me to the toilet; I fly to attend the important duties. O, you would laugh to see your *once* gay friend

“Preside o’er trifles with a solemn face.”

Though, upon second thoughts, why need I dress? Surely there can be no occasion; “for loveliness,” you know, my dear, “needs not “the outward aid of ornament.”

Turning therefore to my sister, I
said,

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said, " Lucy, child, go and dress, while I obey my friend's commands."

Believe me, Fanny, that in asking, " What kind of woman is " Lady Beverly," you could not have put a question more difficult to be answered.

Lady Beverly delights in a numerous retinue of servants, and in the elegance of her table. She is a *mighty good kind of woman*, and eats, drinks, and sleeps in regular rotation; but for another passion, it is not in Lady Beverly you must search

search for it. Mistress of a great fortune, which she knows not how to enjoy, her hours languish in insipidity. She beholds her friends approach and departure with equal indifference. She goes into public, because she observes others do so; and returns home, because she is fatigued. Request charity, and hold out a dignified precedent, and you may command her purse; but to afford succour to distress from the tender motives of humanity, is what she never knew. In fine, Lady Beverly, with all that wealth that
may

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may attract flatterers, or, by a right use, command esteem, lives unadmired, unbeloved; and will die, my Fanny, unregretted; while none but her servants can give testimony that such a woman ever existed.

I fancy you are, ere this, thoroughly tired of this Lady Beverly, "this fair defect of nature," in which, believe me, you are most heartily joined by

Your

ELIZA MONTFORT.

LET-

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LETTER IV.

From the same to the same.

LOVE! Why, in the name of wonder, Fanny, what romance was thy last study? Believe me, love is an antique entombed with our grandmothers; and if our modern pretty fellows ever mention it, it is for want of other conversation; or, as they talk of Cæsar and Alexander, meerly to shew their reading. However, my dear friend, let me introduce my favourite to you.

Now

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Now do not imagine I am going to trace out the highly-finished figure of an Apollo, or the regular graces of an Adonis. Harcourt's elegance is as much superior to the dull, inanimate strokes that mark out beauty, as his wit is above that to which we are accustomed to give the name. In short, we must compile a new dictionary, ere I can hope to give you the least idea of him. By way of attempting it, try to figure to yourself the God of wit descending among us, and assuming the form of Edmond Harcourt---By
this

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this time I presume your sagacity
has led you to discover,

“Tis not a set of features, or complexion,

“The tincture of a skin that I admire.”

To say truth, I have met with
people who tell me Edmond is a
perfect *memento mori*; but to him
I can justly apply what Rollin says
of Alcibiades: “There is no heart
“so hard, or temper so untracta-
“ble, as to hold out against the
“charms and graces of his con-
“versation and intimacy.” Nor
does there exist that being, who
views

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views his approach without transport, or his departure without regret.

His person is tall, very thin, and his face is remarkable for nothing but a pair of lively black eyes, which are under excellent discipline; as they can supply the place, even of that graceful flow of words and elegance of expression, which none besides command. He affects a faucy negligence in his person and manners, for the general run, that renders his attentions, when he is disposed to bestow them,

them, absolutely irresistible: and, if I have not yet secured your esteem for the witty, the elegant, the engaging Edmond Harcourt, dare no longer refuse it to the *Man of Honour*. Yes, my friend, that “Sacred Tie” has ever bound him: that principle, however in the ears of others it may seem but a sound, in his breast has proved itself a reality, a reality as much superior to that *ignis fatuus*, by which many are deluded, as is the sun to the glow-worm. Actuated by this, his gayeties have still been pleasures;

his

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his munificence, discretion ; his
- courage, humanity. What needs
- there more to complete my hero,
but that

“ His generous friendship no cold medium knows ;”

And that, if in our forgiveness
of our enemies, we could lose the
sense of the injuries we have re-
ceived, Edmond Harcourt would be
as happy as he is deserving.

I had a thousand things to tell
you, but have time for no more at
present. Adieu.

LET-

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LETTER V.

Sir George Ashby to Captain Bevill.

WELL said, Bevill, and so thou woudst have thy friend George Ashby sink into a downright Benedick; and for the sake of posterity too! On my word, a mighty unanswerable argument for domesticating a gay young fellow.

No, no, Frederick, I will level mountains, raise plantations, and

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even build hospitals for posterity; but, with the old man in the Spectator, should be glad to see this much talked-of posterity, do something for me.

Thy last letter, Frederick, spoke the frigid, cold adviser. And is Captain Bevil then yet to learn how weak that reason is which can but point out danger, not teach us to avoid it? Yes, my friend, I obey your dictates, I reason much — but reason of Emilia;

“ And where *she* is, all reason dies before her.”

I see

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I see Lady Harriet, I endeavour to rekindle my extinguished passion; but each endeavour recoils upon myself, and tells me it is impossible. True, she is beautiful; but, my friend, when the Earl wished you to marry Lady Mary, did not your eyes bear testimony to her charms? And did you not declare, that meer beauty might attract your senses, but could not captivate your heart? — No, Bevill, 'tis the elegant, the insinuating Emilia, who, with fewer personal graces, possesses all that sweet simplicity of thought, all

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that tender sensibility of soul, which would make even ugliness attractive; 'tis she who has won my heart.

That I once loved Lady Harriet, my friend, how could it be otherwise? Young, unexperienced, undiscerning, my heart readily yielded to her charms; and, in those tender moments of delusion, I gave that fatal paper, that frantic promise, that rends my soul. — What do I say? Even *without* a promise, thy Ashby had been *just*. Yes, Frederick, this heart can mourn, it can bleed in fulfilling
its

its engagements; but it knows not to betray unsuspecting innocence.

Thanks to Lady Waters, (who is on a visit to my mother) I am more frequently *tête à tête* with Emilia. — You know my god-mother — a rough diamond, that needs but the workman's hand to render it of inestimable value. — Nature, my friend, may form the jewel, but it is education alone can give the polish: and how insufficient that unadorned virtue

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to attract admirers, you, who know
Lady Waters, need not be informed
by your

ASHBY.

LET-

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LETTER VI.

Augustus Richmond, Esq; to Sir George Ashby.

IT must be confessed, Sir George Ashby does excel all the rest of his sex; not in elegance of person, in wit, or understanding; (for these, I flatter myself, I may stand the scrutiny with his worship); but in the softer virtues of the heart: for the devil take me, if I should not have sworn at any girl

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for a prude, that had penned such a letter as your last*.

I'll tell you what, George; I have, thanks to my grandmother, some very fine-looking books in my library; such as, The Whole Duty of Man, the Pilgrim's Progress, *et-cetera*; which, should I want to read any thing about Honour and Conscience, I had much rather turn to than your Letters. The Books are only stupid, but your Letters are — the devil.

* This letter does not appear.

I am

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I am actually ashamed to call a man my friend, to whom it is necessary to recount the joys of that love, which,

“ Free as air, at sight of human ties,

“ Spreads its light wings, and in a moment flies.”

Carry off Emilia, (in which project my brains are very much at your service: no bad offer, let me tell you); then marry Lady Harriet, and make the best husband in the world; but there you must shift for yourself. The latter seems such a *quiet* soul; the former, such a

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fool, that, take my word for it, the patience of the one will hold out till yours is quite tired with the other.

In love, forsooth! Pray, George, what do *you* call love? I remember you was always reckoned a good clever fellow at school; but faith, in this instance, I very much doubt your worship's sagacity. What you talk of, seems to me the same kind of *penchant* one boarding-school miss feels for another. What, I'll warrant me, the pretty creature won your heart by helping you to finish
a pair

a pair of net ruffles. Not that, I suppose, she netted a bit better than yourself; but the manner was so obliging! Then five years constancy to Lady Harriet! Incorrigible wretch! Upon my soul, I wonder I have patience to throw away my time upon you: but I have been this fortnight past at the Castle, where a smart little widow at present boasts the honour of my attentions, who, poor creature, takes so much time in dressing, what is much better *undressed*, that I had a mind to encourage a charitable

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fit, and endeavour to work the reformation of a young fellow, who, but for my friendly arm held out to save him, would fall into the lowest abyfs of prudence and ftupidity. I'd give the world to be witnefs of one half hours *tête à tête* between you and Emilia, but not that world fhould bribe me to be longer a fpectator of your dullnefs: for ever defcending on the weather, knotting, and perhaps, by way of variety, now and then on a primrofe, or violet, to enliven the converfation.

But

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But then, so much sensibility can animate even knotting and primroses; and, what is a much more melancholy truth, even make a fool of Sir George Ashby.

If you love, George, convince me of your passion, by snatching Emilia to your arms; if you do not love, why this solemn farce? Marry Lady Harriet and be stupid. At all events, till you have attained some degree of sprightliness, boast not of a friend in

AUGUSTUS RICHMOND.

LET-

LETTER VII.

Lady *Harriet Somner* to Miss *Lenox*.

MY Maria, pity your unhappy friend. You, who have met but with the smiles of love, can but faintly picture the anguish of a heart, bleeding at the indifference of its beloved. Did he, my Maria, exult in my sufferings, or carelessly forget his former attachment, I could despise him — but to despise Sir
George

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George Ashby, indeed, my dear, it is impossible. His attention is unremitted; he studies my very looks, and flies to obey them; but where is the joy that once revelled in his smiles at my approach; where that melting sensibility, that lively approbation, that once animated his intelligent eyes? — Ah, my friend, if Sir George Ashby can change, where shall we seek for constancy? If Sir George Ashby can deceive, where shall we seek sincerity?

I was last night at Ranelagh. Sir George introduced his friend, the
once

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once gay, once blooming Lord Charles Rainsford ; once the life of every assembly : now melancholy, pale, dejected. Oh ! Love ! Thou source of sorrow, what misery dost thou occasion ! Say, my friend, is there a pang which derives not its origin from that spring ? He, too, has lost the partner of his heart.

“ Snatcht ere her prime, and in her bridal hour.”

He walked with the Miss Montforts, two Northamptonshire beauties, who made their first appearance this winter. They are sweet girls.

girls. The eldest, tall, sprightly, blooming, beautiful as an angel, and happy too; for she, my dear, glories in insensibility.

Lucy, the youngest, elegantly formed; a complexion fair as her spotless mind; the most delicate features imaginable; a countenance strongly expressive of the utmost tenderness; and eyes in which you read every sentiment of her heart. — Sweet novice! too unpractised to disguise her sufferings. She loves, Maria; the lovely girl owns her attachment.

Harry

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Harry Willmott, two years ago, spent the summer at Montfort-Hall. Two young people, of exquisite sensibility, and of unequalled merit, constantly together, must, as my sweet Lucy says, indulge a friendship for each other. Ah, Maria, how dangerous are these tender friendships ! She esteemed him, she loved him as her brother. Though always fond of the country, she never thought it so delightful as then, unconscious it was her Henry's presence enlivened every scene.

Colonel

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Colonel Willmott destroyed the pleasing dream. He wrote to his son, that, by great interest, he was nominated a writer for Bengall. The opportunity was not to be neglected; and the doating lover must leave the mistress of his heart; leave her ignorant of his sentiments.

The servant who brought the letter, waited with a chaise, and Harry Willmott must embark at Portsmouth on the morrow. What could he do? His Lucy's eyes had oft betrayed the secret of her heart, a
secret

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secret of which she only was unconscious, and ignorant of his sentiments, that he should, doubtless, find her married on his return.

The thought was not to be borne; it determined him. He flew to the garden, and found his lovely Lucy busied in selecting the fairest flowers to form a nosegay for her tender friend. In artless language he avowed the purest passion for the amiable Lucy. To know she loved, to find a lover, and to lose him, were the same. She has not since heard of him.

Surely,

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Surely, my dear, he must have had opportunities for writing! O, these men are strangely negligent; and though they will not allow us their equals in understanding, willingly yield us the palm in conduct.

Adieu, Maria. Think sometimes of my Lucy Montfort, think sometimes of Sir George Ashby, and if you should ever be tempted to love, think of your friend,

Your HARRIET.

LET.

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LETTER VIII.

Lord Charles Rainsford to Colonel Harcourt.

NOT yet arrived, Harcourt?
You cannot imagine how many uneasy days I have passed, in anxious expectation. Surely no business can be so urgent to keep you from your friend: say rather amusement is the attracting loadstone; that the charming Miss Montfort, a female Ovid, has metamor-

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tamorphosed my sprightly insensible friend, into the most despairing inamorato that ever bore the name.

And so, my good Harcourt is absolutely, in sober sadness, breathing his tender vows, at the feet of a peevish, unfeeling beauty?

“ And have th’ ill-judging sex then wills so blind,

“ That Edmond, if in love, can sigh in vain ?”

Prithee, Edmond, let me twine the willow, to crown my despairing friend.

What

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What you tell me of her sister may be true; but the sex have no longer charms for me. Were all their insinuating attractions centered in one charming piece, this heart would be still true to its first possessor, would still retain its Delia's image.

The sweet Lucy Montfort, you say, seems unhappy. Perhaps she weeps a bosom friend; perhaps a softer cause; the pangs of disappointed love

“ Prey on her damask cheek.”

Amiable

Amiable girl! my heart bleeds for thee. Harcourt, assure her of my friendship, a friendship always ready at the call of distress, a heart always open to the unfortunate.

Ah, for this fair Helen, I would lay my life, in less than a month, Harcourt is the gallant Colonel of the fighting train. The idea is infinitely diverting. Then for the parish church, ringing of bells, newspapers, plum-cake, and a long *et-cetera* of bridal appendages — but I beg your pardon, I had forgot, my

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lively friend scorns to marry thus *en
etiquette.*

What say you, Edmond, to a trip to Scotland? The delight of persuading a fine girl to run off with you, and all the dear varieties of the journey, will just suit thy enterprizing genius.

I confess myself greatly obliged to your fair Eliza: I no longer tremble at thy dreaded raillery, and feel a malicious pleasure, at the thought that you have learnt, from your own feelings, to pity your friend.

I shall

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I shall be with you very soon.
Each object here recalls its lovely
mistress; each flower that,

“ Touch’d by her fair tendance, gladlier grew,”

now mourns in silent sorrow a fairer
flower.

May you, my friend, never experience the excruciating pangs of having the object of your affections torn from you in the very moment that should have insured your happiness; may you never know the sufferings of your

R A I N S F O R D.

D 2

LET-

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LETTER IX.

From the same to the same.

L O N D O N.

IMmediately upon my arrival, I flew to your lodgings, and was informed you had left town the night before.

How unlucky your absence ! how severely felt by a heart panting to unburthen itself into the tender bosom of friendship !

Raging

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Raging at my disappointment, I resolved to return to Bellmont; and had actually ordered a chaise for that purpose, but was prevented by Sir George Ashby, and Augustus Richmond, who insisted on my accompanying them to Ranelagh; they rejected all my excuses as trifling; and meer civility forced compliance.

In the name of wonder, Harcourt, how came *you* absent, and Miss Montfort at Ranelagh? Though surrounded by a crowd of flatterers, there still seemed some-

D 3

thing

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thing wanting to your Eliza's happiness, and what that something was, not all her affected indifference could disguise. *Ce n'est que du badinage*; and yet, I dare swear, thy unconscionable vanity will construe this gross flattery into simple truth; and we shall see the self-satisfied Edmond Harcourt, with that air of agreeable effrontery and assuming negligence, fancy himself a perfect woman-killer; see him

“Strut a straw-breadth nearer to the skies.”

Soon after our entrance, Sir

George

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George Ashby joined Lady Harriet, Richmond his old associates, and your friend exhibited a melancholy proof how insipid every amusement is in which the heart is uninterested.

Never did I see a greater assembly of fine women. Lovely flutters! Wonders of a day! Say my friend, which of them can boast a form more sweetly elegant, a face more beautiful, a soul so spotless, as my Delia's? And yet,

"Like blossom'd trees, o'erturn'd by vernal storms,

"Lovely in death, the beauteous ruin lies."

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My friend, I often weary you with tales of love — yet with these thoughts, constantly in my head, it is impossible but that they must sometimes descend to my pen; and surely, for such a cause, even the most severe, will pardon the rising sigh.

D. LET.

LETTER X.

Augustus Richmond, Esq; to Sir George Ashby.

A Bsolutely, George, you are intolerable, with your sensibility, sentiment, and a thousand founding nothings, that never entered any other than thy rusticated head. Pray, Ashby, if you have the least ambition *pour sçavoir vivre*, leave these old fashioned notions to those who are obliged, through

D 5 necessity,

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necessity, to adopt them; a set of old women, and antiquated coxcombs; and let us embrace the pleasures within our reach; nor vainly refine on happiness till, like a vapour, it eludes our grasp.

I am, at present, engaged in the prettiest little adventure, and with the prettiest little girl imaginable. Now had I but thy soft stile, thy roses and lilies! — Faith, George, I can no more equal *thee* in description, than *thou* canst me in action. Our talents are *tout au contraire*; and when

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when nature ordained a phaeton,
why she was obliged to form an
Ovid to sing the burning world,
and your worship shall have the
honour of celebrating my ex-
ploits.

My present goddess possesses the
most enchanting *naïveté* imagina-
ble: and that the dear soul has a
taste for the witty, the elegant,
the agreeable, is incontestably proved
by her approbation of Augustus
Richmond.

Give me a girl, George, that
has some life, some animation:

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not one of your prim misses,
educated between the nurse and
grandmother, and ushered into the
world a wonder of female virtue;
a specimen of their care, indeed,
since they have taken pains to era-
dicate every native feeling of the
heart, and have at length suc-
ceeded, and raised their charge
above the snares of men.

Faith, George, I could sooner
pay my adorations to my grand-
mother's image, than to those
prudish, fair ones, those unnatural
antidotes to love.

I cry

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I cry you mercy, Ashby: upon my life I had forgot; these ladies, "of affections mild," are the very goddesses of your idolatry. — Now, harkee, my friend; go to Salmon's, purchase a wax doll, the size of Emilia, and run over your chime of sentiments, sensations, honour, delicacy, etcetera; and, as Emilia is too modest to let a word escape her on such naughty subjects, and you young platonists, doubtless, possess great strength of imagination, you will easily take your doll for

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for your Love ; and, I would lay my life, George, if you might be married a month, before you would find out the deception.

And so thou hast no ambition to be counted a man of gallantry? —

Well, it is mighty pretty to quit the field, where we are sure of being excelled ; but I have promised you my assistance. Dastardly coward, not to brave all dangers, upon the strength of that assurance ! I tell thee what, friend, Caesar's motto is mine ; *Veni, Vidi,*

Vici :

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Vici: and really the poor souls are so fond, you would be a most excellent second.

I should like to meet with this "Unsuspecting Innocence" you talk of. Such a phrase might have sounded very well from the lips of Adam, before his consort transgressed; but with that transgression, the term grew useless.

Believe me, Ashby, I open thy letters with as much solemnity as if they were funeral sermons.

Is

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Is it impossible to burnish thy
rusticated ideas? I shall positively
give thee up, if it is not effect-
ed by the enlivening correspon-
dence of

AUGUSTUS RICHMOND.

LET

THE ASSIGNATION. 63

LETTER XI.

Sir George Ashby to Captain Bevil.

YES, my friend, I feel the force of your arguments; but reason is too weak to repel the insinuating intruder; my heart so readily admits;

Lady Harriet's person is beautiful, her manner commanding, her mind accomplished; but my Emilia, to all the sweet simplicity, the artless graces

66 THE ASSIGNATION.

graces of the rural villager, joins the elegant polish of a court. The sweetest innocence, the most attractive softness, the noblest sentiments, strongly characterise my lovely girl. In short, Frederick, I will be just to the one, but must doat upon the other. Lady Harriet, unaccustomed to disguise, perceives not, that my assiduities are the effect of complaisance, the forced attention of lifeless ceremony. — Oh! Frederick! Can your friend then make a deserving woman miserable; and, in return
for

THE ASSIGNATION. 67

for beauty, love and constancy, offer but the cold remnant of an alienated heart? — You know I am not vain, nor apt to fancy myself beloved; but a thousand little incidents, visible only to a lover's watchful eye, assure me my Emilia is not indifferent; and Lady Harriet owns her attachment. — Instruct me, Frederick, to reconcile these seeming contradictions; to ratify my vows to Lady Harriet, insure Miss Lesley's happiness, and restore to this wounded bosom its long-lost peace.

Lady

68 THE ASSIGNATION.

Lady Ashby, though the most affectionate of mothers, and in other things ever solicitous for her son's felicity, trembles at the thoughts of an unequal alliance. All her pleasures center in pomp and splendor; and, in her idea, bliss is a never-failing attendant in the pageant of grandeur. — Emilia sometimes ventures to argue with my mother on this subject; and though every word she utters penetrates my soul, I dare not second sentiments I admire. Shall we, my friend, ungenerously ridicule a failing which

THE ASSIGNATION. 69

which has its origin in maternal affection? I always loved Lady Ashby; but since her kindness to Miss Lesley, I idolize the good old woman. Charity, kindness, benevolence, are virtues so very feminine, that the woman who is destitute of them, wants the sweetest embellishments of female virtue.

Would you believe it? Your gay friend, Edmond Harcourt, is grown a woman's slave; and the charming Miss Montfort, the fair arbitress of his fate. How I love to see these boasting insensibles humbled! The
poor

70 THE ASSIGNATION.

poor Miss Cartwright too, who gloried in her indifference (an indifference by the by never attempted), wanted but an April day to thaw the icy coldness of her heart.

Tell me, Frederick, which are the most detestable ; your mighty susceptible females, or your unnatural insensibles ? The first, having somewhere heard tenderness is a female charm, shew the softness of their heads by the susceptibility of their hearts. The second, conscious of their want of attractions,

en-

THE ASSIGNATION. 71

endeavour to enliven desire, by apparent opposition. The latter, indeed, seem most to have studied our tempers, since we all love to surmount difficulties. After all, Bevill, the happy, the only happy are the insensible.

I expected you in town yesterday, and waited to introduce you to Miss Lesley. What, have you no curiosity, no desire to see my Emilia? Take care, take care, captain; for, believe me, if your heart is not indeed invulnerable, she knows how to wound it.

The

The chariot waits. I go to Lady Harriet --- perhaps to name the day. --- O reason, neglected Monitress, teach me in this trying situation to preserve my honour, nor yet to wound my peace.

One o'clock --- just returned from Grosvenor Square.

Lady Harriet never looked so lovely, lively, tender, animated. --- Why, why, my friend, have I not a heart to bestow? --- I pressed her to name the day; she turned pale; and a shower of tears cut me to the soul.

“ Shall

“ Shall it be next week? — the
“ week after? — Speak, my
“ Harriet, what means this si-
“ lence?”

Her heart, she said, had long
been mine — she was entirely at
my disposal.

I was unusually attentive, yet I
thought every instance of my ten-
derness seemed to encrease her me-
lancholy.

I mentioned Lucy Montfort.
Lady Harriet talked of the pangs
of unrequited love with more than
common energy, wept for Lord

74 THE ASSIGNATION.

Charles Rainsford, and lamented that the fickleness, or death of one party should be a source of such inexpressible anguish to the other.

I again begged her to name the day that was to make me the happiest of men. She made no other answer than by a most expressive look, that seemed to say, "My Ashby, I know what this attention costs you." — Oh! my friend, is it possible she can have perceived the latent coldness through this fond veil of love?

I came home out of spirits, peevish,

peevish, unsatisfied. My mother wondered what so much affected her darling son. Lady Harriet's cruelty, a titled rival, a thousand causes offered themselves to her imagination. My Emilia's feelings, in that moment, crowded to the lovely portals of her soul -- her eyes declared her concern. In the sweetest accents she enquired after my health, if my head was out of order. — Ah! Frederick, why did she not dive rather deeper and search my heart? How would

76 THE ASSIGNATION.

the lovely girl be astonished to find
it was she herself who caused the
anguish of her

A S H B Y.

L E T.

LETTER XII.

Colonel *Harcourt* to Lord *Charles Rainsford*.

PRithee, Rainsford, did the blind
deity, when he enlisted you
among the number of his votaries,
endow you with this power of
searching the hearts of others?
True, you discovered my love before
I was conscious my regard for Miss
Montfort merited that title; yet,

78 THE ASSIGNATION.

believe me, notwithstanding your amazing penetration, you have not yet fathomed this heart. What! my Lord, is this insinuating passion to render me incapable of the more solid joys of friendship? Is the charming Eliza entirely to engross every faculty of my soul? Whence proceeded this idea? Not, surely, from yourself; for, with all the passion that ever entered a tender heart, you was still feelingly awake to the calls of friendship.

My Eliza is the admiration, the idol of all who know her. Beautiful

as

THE ASSIGNATION. 79

as an angel, she strikes all eyes:
sensible, sprightly, amiable, she
charms all hearts. Cold and un-
susceptible,

" She gazes all around her,
" And wins a thousand hearts,
" But Cupid cannot wound her,
" For she has all his darts."

She triumphs in our sufferings,
and ridicules our pangs. Oh!
Rainsford, Rainsford, teach me to
break these galling chains. Think
you see your friend (once free as
the warbling choristers) fighting
with a crowd of coxcombs,

" By scorn alone, distinguished from the rest."

E 4

Your,

86 THE ASSIGNATION.

You, who are so intimately acquainted with the tender passion, teach a lover to recover his lost freedom. Teach thy friend to break a woman's yoke, and be again himself.

Miss Montfort yesterday enquired after you.

"Colonel Harcourt," said she, "How is your friend Lord Charles? Still immured at Bellmont, and thinks, I dare swear, when out of the reach of temptation, to make a merit of his constancy."

"Surely,

THE ASSIGNATION. 81

“ Surely, Miss Montfort will
“ own his Lordship’s retreat was
“ highly necessary: there is no suf-
“ taining, unwounded, the artillery
“ of her eyes.”
“ Poor Colonel! I am afraid
“ the cause will be but indifferently
“ defended, when the opponent
“ descends, by compliment, to
“ cheat his adversary of her un-
“ derstanding. But there can be
“ no merit, Sir, in unnecessary
“ violence; nor can he who shuns
“ the combat, ever deserve a tri-
“ umph.”

82 THE ASSIGNATION.

“ His friend, Miss Montfort, will
“ be a warning to him never to
“ trust his happiness to a woman.
“ O! my Eliza! either bless me
“ with your smiles, or teach me
“ to despise them. If my unre-
“ mitted assiduities can never soften
“ this stoical indifference, for mer-
“ cy's sake appear not thus all
“ lovely.”

“ Upon my word, Colonel, a
“ most excellent speech that:— and
“ extempore too!”

“ Ungenerous girl, calmly to
“ ridicule the woes you cause!

“ But

THE ASSIGNATION. 83

“ But, know, madam, this heart
“ can break, but it will burst your
“ chain.”

“ Right, Sir. This heroism is
“ infinitely becoming; and you
“ will, doubtless, maintain it.”

(looking at her watch.) “ I forgot,

“ I appointed to meet Lord Esdale

“ in the Mall, and it is now two

“ o'clock. If Colonel Harcourt

“ ever thinks it worth his while to

“ call in Brook-street, we shall be

“ glad to see our friend.”

“ Oh! my Eliza! You know

“ your power. The heart, once

84 THE ASSIGNATION.

"stamped with your form, must

"ever bear the lovely image."

(snatching her hand.) "I cannot

"leave you thus; swear you for-

"give me."

Lucy's entrance put an end to our conversation; and I escorted the ladies to the Mall.

Lucy was sweetly inquisitive about you. She talked of you with a look of tender concern. She pities you. "Ah, Colonel Harcourt,"

said she, "how dreadful to be separated from what we love!

"But why cry at Bellmont, where

THE ASSIGNATION. 85

“every object must remind him
“of his Delia? Surely this gay
“metropolis might dissipate his me-
“lancholy.”

“May I flatter myself my sweet
“friend speaks from experi-
“ence?”

“No, Colonel, I wish not to
“erase Mr. Willmott’s image from
“my heart: there is a pleasure in
“unsuccessful love, when we are
“certain the object deserves our
“tenderness.”

Tell me, my Lord, cannot the
amiable Lucy succeed your Delia?

I am

86 THE ASSIGNATION.

I am but a bad interpreter of looks, if yours have not sometimes spoken that language. — Confess the truth, Charles; do justice to your friend's penetration; nor blush to own that beauty, virtue, and sensibility, may win your heart.

LET-

THE ASSIGNATION. 87

LETTER XIII.

Lady Harriet Somner to Sir George Ashby.

THERE was a time when Sir George Ashby lived but in the smiles of his Harriet; a time when he promised, that, should his love ever suffer any diminution, he would candidly confess the change. Does he then imagine his Harriet's heart too tender to bear the mortifying shock, or her head too weak to furnish

88 THE ASSIGNATION.

furnish excuses for involuntary inconstancy? Kindly solicitous for her peace, he has endeavoured to insure her happiness at the expence of his own. And is he yet to learn they are inseparable?

Yes, Sir George, the conflict was noble, was worthy of you: but could I be base enough to let you suffer for your generosity, I must despise myself. A heart, above disguise, should never be reduced to counterfeit. Sir George Ashby's word is the strongest bond. I return that paper which, while it contained the

dictates

THE ASSIGNATION. 89

dictates of his heart, was esteemed
invaluable. That heart, now free
as the hand that wrote it, has liberty
to rove where ere it pleases.

May every blessing attend Sir
George Ashby, and the lady, who
possesses that affection, which was
once the greatest pride of

HARRIET SOMNER.

LET.

96 THE ASSIGNATION.

LETTER XIV.

Sir George Ashby to Lady Harriet Somner.

AND can Lady Harriet think her Ashby's heart is callous to every tender feeling; that it is insensible of her exalted generosity?—Indeed, Madam, I feel it all. Eminently distinguished by the charms of person, your lovely mind shines with superior lustre. I confess myself unworthy your regard. Long

as

THE ASSIGNATION. 91

as I was myself, my heart was yours, and when it ceased to love you, it sunk below your notice. Oh! Harriet, you have taught me to despise myself. Sir George Ashby is indeed contemptible, while Lady Harriet's virtue, like the jewel extracted from the Indian's leg, causes inexpressible pain, but dazzles in proportion to the anguish it creates.

LET-

92 THE ASSIGNATION.

LETTER XV.

Lord Charles Rainsford to Colonel Harcourt.

YES, Harcourt, it is not in man
to listen to sentiments so re-
fined, clothed in the most elegant
language, and proceeding from
ruby lips, and be insensible. Yet
my affection for Lucy Montfort is
pure as the angelic form, pure as
the spotless mind that roused my
sensibility, and assured me I had still
a heart.

THE ASSIGNATION. 93

a heart. I imagine it may be possible to pass through life without a tender attachment; but, believe me, it is not in man to love but once. The heart once softened, readily admits future impressions: sensibility, once roused, can never after lie dormant. Lucy too is engaged: her faithless Willmott still maintains his empire in her heart.

I supped last night with Colonel Willmott, and enquired after his son. He informed me he was going to be married, extremely well married: the lady young, hand-

94 THE ASSIGNATION.

handsome, rich. What a blow for the tender, the amiable Lucy! Yes, my sweet girl, I will supply his place: we will indeed be friends, constant, unalterable friends.

Methinks I see you laugh, Harcourt, and ask, where this mighty *friendly attachment* is to end. Laugh as you will, my friend, I am no platonist; yet do not believe me incapable of friendship more refined than I can possibly describe.

I set out in a few hours for the duke of ———'s country seat:

feat: a visit, Edmond, I hoped to have paid with my Delia. —

Ah, how unstable is human happiness! A breeze bursts the thin texture of felicity; and our joys evaporate in a moment. Had

any one last year assured me I should so soon have lost the idol of my doating heart, I had scorned the ill-omen'd boder. From my example let no man depend upon the morrow for happiness. —

Happiness! Ah, my friend! What is this much talked-of happiness?

An ideal shadow, much thought of,

96 THE ASSIGNATION.

of, but never grasped; that,

“ Like the circle bounding earth and skies,

“ Allures from far, yet as we follow flies.”

In Continuation.

The Castle, 12 o'clock.

ON my life a most enlivening
society for a love-sick man! The
gallant Lord Egerton is here,
who

THE ASSIGNATION. 97

who has been dying, in rhyme, these twenty years, and is now gayer than ever. Pity his looks contradict his poetical assertions; though, if I may believe him, the ladies, fearing to lose so bright a subject of their charms, have, through meer selfishness, preserved the valuable life of this heroic Don Quixote.

We have also here the eloquent Lord Efdale, a second Demosthenes, who harangues on beauty with the utmost propriety, and embellishes

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a head--

98 THE ASSIGNATION.

a head-dress with all the flowers of rhetoric.

Then the inviting Lady Sarah --- an old maid, Harcourt --- who gapes for a civil speech as does a fish out of water for air, and is ready to eat up every young fellow who comes within five yards of her.

We have here, likewise, the lovely Arabella, who thinks and talks of nothing but her charms. She vows she pities the poor young men her cruelty drove to despair.

“ But

THE ASSIGNATION. 99

“ But love, you know, charming
“ Arabella, on pity cannot live.”

“ True, my Lord, it is too thin
“ a diet. But pray, since Mr.
“ Patchwell, the lawyer, told me
“ last night murder is a crime,
“ what will become of me who
“ have killed so many?”

“ O, Madam, love is the in-
“ separable attendant on beauty,
“ and beauty like yours was made
“ to wound.”

“ Dear, my Lord, and do you
“ really think, I am so handsome?
“ — Well, I always knew I was

100 THE ASSIGNATION.

“ a beauty. Poor Sir Harry, and
“ my Lord, and the Duke, and,
“ and, —— ”

“ O, my dear Arabella, it is
“ impossible to count your adorers.
“ With undisputed beauty you strike
“ all eyes; and, sure to conquer,
“ need but to be seen,” —— *Quelle*
bagatelle to entertain my Harcourt !
Did the sex consider how infinitely
more attractive, the amiable endow-
ments of the mind render them
in the eyes of men of sense (mind,
Harcourt, in *our* eyes) they would
cultivate the hidden diamond. But
why

THE ASSIGNATION. 101

why turn our arms against ourselves, by adding more charms to the already too alluring sex? Happy for us, kind nature formed them

“ In outward shew elaborate,”

“ In inward less exact.”

Lady Frances M——; the Duke's daughter, is rather pretty, but proud and impertinent, silly without simplicity, and artful without understanding. — My God! Harcourt, when shall I leave this fatiguing company? — Lord Eger-

102 THE ASSIGNATION.

ton makes me sick with his sonnets; Lord Efdale tires me to death with eloquence; Lady Betty with civility; Arabella with her charms; and Lady Frances with her rank. --- The Duke's eldest son is for ever breaking in on my retirement, to adorn the room with flowers, or scent it with essences; while the younger children distract me with noise. In short, Harcourt, for the remainder of my life, I shall have an invincible aversion to poetry and poets, detest eloquence, civility, beauty, assiduity, and noise. I will
not

THE ASSIGNATION. 103

not stay, the most urgent business calls me to Bellmont; any thing on earth for an excuse. Say, Emond, can your friend long inhabit a place where to think on his Delia would be to profane her lovely image?

The Duke and Dutchesse seem destitute of souls. Believe me, their greatest merit is their having no character. Too idle to think, too insensible to feel for themselves, they drive with the torrent. Happily for them, their associates,

though ridiculous, are innocent, and their Graces boast of virtue : virtuous, Harcourt, by the meer absence of vice. Good God ! And couldst thou intend thy creatures for this negative perfection ? Reject with me, my friend, the humiliating, the unworthy idea ; let us, by our conduct, assert the superiority of reason, and conquer our opponents, by first shewing we can conquer ourselves.

How is my amiable Lucy ? Does she ever mention her friends ? —

Ah,

THE ASSIGNATION. 105

Ah, rather does she ever talk of Willmott? Sweet girl, she trembles not at the impending pang. Conscious she merits happiness, she doubts not of attaining it. Harcourt, I cannot pity when suspicion is over-reached, or art outwitted; but that this charming confidence, the natural result of innocence and understanding, should be deceived, wounds me to the soul.

Your Eliza, my friend, cannot be long insensible; the very air she

F 5

breathes

breathes is infectious. Her sister's sufferings may, perhaps, steel her heart against the tender passion; for, notwithstanding all her charming vivacity, I am convinced each sigh, that escapes her Lucy, is echoed from her heart. Sweet girls! These affectionate sisters, my Harcourt, what tender wives would they make! How susceptible of love!

Is Sir George Ashby fettered? This phoenix must redeem the constancy of our sex. Five years acquainted

THE ASSIGNATION. 107

quainted with Lady Harriet; five years assured of her affection; and still attached! Hear this, ye who blame our fickleness; and wonder at the sex you vilify.

Lady Harriet is universally confessed charming: but is she more charming, Edmond, than Lucy Montfort? Yet she was left rejected and forsaken.

I shall leave the Castle to-morrow, and wish you would meet me at Bellmont. Is the request too much? Come, my friend, and

108 THE ASSIGNATION.

with one hour of Harcourt's conversation, obliterate these days of folly. — Come, to oblige your

RAINSFORD.

LET-

THE ASSIGNATION. 1091

LETTER XVI.

Augustus Richmond, Esq; to Sir George Ashby.

HA! Ha! Ha! My poor sober
Sir George! And has its
Harriet really foil'd it at its own
weapons? I'll be hanged if the
letters you enclosed me are not ad-
mirable; and you are the prettiest
pair of turtles, that ever coo'd in
concert. *Mais courage, mon ami,*
love

110 THE ASSIGNATION.

love and fortune favour the daring :
strike a bold stroke, and the day
is your own. But prithee, George,
no longer persist in believing thy-
self in love. It is a mighty pretty
word, and derives inexpressible
graces from the lips of a pretty
fellow. Then it opens such a
fund of small talk ; it is impossible
to support conversation without its
animating assistance. In short, it is
a pretty *bagatelle*, invented for the
amusement of leisure hours ; but
to make a serious thing of it,
really, George, I blush for you.

We

THE ASSIGNATION. 111

We men of the world (in which society I thought you had been initiated) content ourselves with the sound; and leave to villagers, and women the reality. *Eh bien!* and how is the *amiable* Emilia? (your own epithet) and how the *soft* Sir George? Faith, Ashby, I would have run off with all the women in England in less time than you take in swearing you are in love.

I have thought of the most divine project for you. Contrive a breach between Emilia and your mother;
then

112 THE ASSIGNATION.

then let the *dear innocent* throw herself into your friendly arms for protection, *et l'affaire est fini*. But, lest your worship, being no conjuror, or in other terms, a very virtuous young man, should be at a loss to accomplish this *fracas*, behold my ready pen presents the means. Has not your mother (I never knew an old woman of quality that had not) some favoured friend, some humble confident, with whom she sits and recounts the conquests of her youth, recalls the happy hours of courtship, and
finds

finds the flatterers of her youth even exceeded by the dependants of her old age, till, by extorted commendations, she puts it out of her power to suspect the abilities of that head, or the integrity of that heart, which has been to her the tribunal from which there is no appeal? — This woman, so long supporting the toils of repeated narrations, and the tedious task of flattery and applause, hopes, in the will of her benefactress to find that reward her life never could afford her. If there is such a woman,

George,

114 THE ASSIGNATION.

George, about your mother, gratify her avarice, and she is firmly your friend. Then let her infuse suspicions into Lady Ashby, that Emilia carries on an intrigue with — Nay, start not — with your worship, which your evident attachment to each other will readily countenance. But let the humble gentlewoman insinuate that should her Ladyship enter into any explanation with Emilia, she will be under a necessity of shewing great resentment to her son, which must be accounted for to Lady

Harriet;

THE ASSIGNATION. 115

Harriet ; and therefore still longer protract an alliance she has been so long the occasion of delaying. In the mean time, the girl, finding an evident alteration in Lady Ashby's conduct, flies with her tale of sorrow to her friend Sir George, intreats your intercession with the old damsel, who, convinced by that of her guilt, orders her instantly to leave the house. Overwhelmed with grief for her misfortune, with regret that she knows not the occasion of it, she accepts your offer of conveying

116 THE ASSIGNATION.

veying her to some country village, till her confident (for I know all your Misses have violent notions of friendship) can be informed of her distress. It will be your fault, you know, if the letter ever reaches the hand for which it was intended; you, therefore, have the less cause to fear detection; and Emilia, in the supposed infidelity of her female friend, will have double reason to adore your goodness.

Dear creatures! I can no longer have the cruelty to keep you waiting.

THE ASSIGNATION. 117

waiting. (The widow I mean, and a devilish fine girl that have been prancing under my window this half hour.) — Behold, George, how great my friendship! — Now for the women.

“ See your conquering hero comes !”

AUGUSTUS RICHMOND.

LET-

118 THE ASSIGNATION.

LETTER XVII.

Miss Winchester to Miss Lesley.

MY dear friend, you know not your danger. This Sir George Ashby, why so often mentioned; why dwell with such delight on his name? Oh, Emilia, I tremble for you. Your unexperienced heart, captivated by that fair semblance of virtue, sees not the

THE ASSIGNATION. 119

the betrayer in the polite, the attentive Sir George. Charmed by the gay tints, the blooming foliage of the rose, it thinks not of the thorn. How should my amiable, my artless Emilia, herself incapable of disguise, suspect it in another? It is true, Sir George is engaged: but believe me, my sweet girl, beauties, like yours, might tempt him to (might perhaps justify) inconstancy. Lady Ashby, though universally allowed a good and benevolent woman, is rigid, even to severity, in her ideas of filial
obe-

obedience; and highly valuing the gifts of fortune, can you think it probable she will sacrifice Lady Harriet Somner to—Emilia Lesley? — O, my love, call your reason to your aid, suffer not your heart to be engaged, and remember a sentiment I have frequently heard you admire. “A maid passes the
 “first bounds of reservedness who
 “allows herself to *think* she is in
 “love.” — Pardon the apprehensions of a friend, zealous for her Emilia’s welfare: Lady Harriet has a claim to your Ashby’s

un-

THE ASSIGNATION. 121

undivided heart. — Were there no other impediment, yet your dependant situation, his rank in life, Lady Ashby's ambition — Indeed, Emilia, it cannot be. Consult your own happiness, and shun this seducing enticer, this Sir George.

What say you, my dear girl? the country is at this season peculiarly charming. My Emilia, quit the glittering scene, and in the sweets of rural retirement regain thy almost lost serenity. — Lady Ashby will give permission for a few weeks absence, and it

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shall be my ambition to make your stay agreeable; not that I can promise you half the fine things you hourly hear. I blush to say, that, where I am, there should be a dearth of beaux; but your Henrietta will be fonder than a train of flatterers, and her friendship more unalterable than the oaths of lovers.

LET-

LETTER XVIII.

Sir George Ashby to Augustus Richmond, Esq;

"**S**TART not!" — Ah, Augustus, is it possible I should do otherwise than start, at the complicated scene of villany your last presented to my imagination? Diabolical invention! And yet, Augustus, see the depravity of human reason: I adopt a villany my heart

detests. Already have I set the implement of cruelty at work. — Surely the Devil presented Mrs. Burton's image to you, you drew her so exactly. The woman would persuade me, too, she thinks it for my good Emilia should be removed, that my marriage may be no longer delayed. — The gentle Emilia has this instant sent to intreat my company in her dressing-room. Never before did I obey her dear commands so reluctantly.

Sir

Sir George Asby in Continuation.

EMILIA met me with a flood
of tears.

“Ah, Sir George,” said she,
“how can I relate my sorrows to
“you, or how hope the son, should
“condescend to hear the distresses
“of a wretched dependant on his
“mother’s bounty, when that mo-
“ther disdains to listen to a recital
“of her anguish, or her interces-

“ sions for forgiveness, though unconscious of a crime ?”

She sunk into a chair, unable to proceed, till my endeavours to soothe her had, in some measure, succeeded.

“ I took the liberty, Sir George,” continued she, “ to request the favour of an interview, in hopes from the goodness you have ever shewn me (though when Lady Ashby proves unkind, where can I hope for friendship?) that you would intercede for my forgiveness,

“giveness, or at least learn the
“cause of my misfortune.”

I gave her instant assurances of
my concern for her interest, left
her, and went to my mother's
apartment.

Oh, Richmond, how shall I
describe to you the success our
deep-laid villany met with here?
The rage of Lady Ashby was as
great as you could wish. She bade
me instantly tell Emilia to quit her
house. My affected intreaties ex-
asperated her more, and she sent
the most cruel message by Mrs.

128 THE ASSIGNATION.

Burton. On my return to the dejected Emilia, I endeavoured (but in vain) to calm her troubled soul: She repeatedly called upon her friend, her Henrietta Winchester; wished her kind protectress at hand; talked of flying to her; but, cast off by Lady Ashby, who would receive her?

Every minute I was on the point of owning my guilt, of throwing myself at Lady Ashby's feet, and entreating her to restore Emilia to her favour. — Are these, thought I, the joys of that love Richmond
talks

talks of, which can know no happiness, but in the wretchedness of its object? But the thought that it was now too late to obtain belief from Lady Ashby deterred me. I told Emilia I would in a post chaise convey her to a farm about twenty miles distant, and that, in the meantime, nothing on my part, and that of Mrs. Burton, should be omitted to effect Lady Ashby's reconciliation. — Poor, deluded girl! Ah, Richmond! where is the so-much boasted merit of deceiving, and to whom belongs the triumph, since

130 THE ASSIGNATION.

the deceiver feels a thousand pangs for every one his wiles inflict?

The chaise I had ordered, drove up to the door. I put the trembling Emilia into it, and conveyed her to a little retreat, whose peaceful shades never before received so fair a visiter, or — such an accomplished villain.

I have taken lodgings at a farm in the neighbourhood — but take notice, Richmond, never will I receive Emilia to my arms, but with her own consent. Talk no more, therefore, of your potions,
your

THE ASSIGNATION. 131

your poisonous draughts: you have
already administered one with
which all happiness fled from the
breast of my Emilia, and conse-
quently from that of her adoring

A S H B Y.

G 6

LET

132 THE ASSIGNATION.

LETTER XIX.

Miss Montfort to Miss Sedley.

“ If that the world and love were young,
“ And truth in every shepherd’s tongue,”

I Might perhaps listen to my poor
Harcourt; but, as things are
situated, upon my word, Sir, it is
impossible. These men are our
never-ceasing torments. Love them
and they leave you, scorn them and
they

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they tease you to death. Believe me, Colonel, I love myself too well to make a present of my liberty. "The maid who loves must put her trust in miracles for safety:" and I not being blest with the faith that removes mountains, seek not for happiness in sensibility, lest vainly aiming at pleasure, I make shipwreck of my peace.—These men, Fanny, are never repulsed, it is impossible to affront them. Our smiles assure them they possess our hearts; our very frowns have a peculiar meaning; and if, disgusted
at

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at their shocking appearance, we venture to shut our eyes, they swear it is but to deliver ourselves from temptation.

Strange that Lucy has not yet heard from Harry Willmott! Ah, Fanny, how miserable the maid, who trusts in man for happiness! Conscious of their power to pain us, they refine on torture, and with amazing indifference, consign us to the torments of suspense, and all the pangs of ill-requited love.

Lord Charles Rainsford has been some days in town, he seems diligently

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gently assiduous in studying my Lucy's wishes, and transcendently delighted when he can procure her pleasure. Would this amiable man might supply her Willmott's place!

By the way, Fanny, don't you think his Delia's image readily erased? Ah, believe them not. When they swear eternal love it is but a bait to tempt us to their hook, and this their boasted constancy but an *ignis fatuus* to lure us to our ruin.

A knock at the door,

“

“ If

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“ If it is Colonel Harcourt, let
“ him be admitted.”

He comes at a good time, Fanny,
and your friend is in a most charm-
ing disposition for a love scene.

“ Good morrow, Colonel.”

“ Writing Miss Montfort! I fear

“ I interrupt you. Happy they to

“ whom those letters are addressed.

“ — Perhaps a favoured lover.

“ Ah, my Eliza, is it not so? Or

“ nature, charmed with the lovely

“ casket, forgot it wanted but a

“ heart to render you her most

“ perfect production.”

“ On

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“ On my word, Colonel, these
“ clear days are prodigiously advan-
“ tageous to the understanding.
“ A good conceit that, and origi-
“ nal too, I dare swear. Will a
“ walk be agreeable to you, Sir?
“ We were just going out. —
“ Betty, let my sister know the
“ Colonel waits to attend her. —
“ No excuses, positively you must
“ go.”
“ Oh, Miss Montfort, allow
“ me a few minutes. Can you
“ resolve to trifle with a heart
“ that

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“that adores you; to triumph” in
“a lover’s sufferings?”

“Still on the old subject, Har-
court? I must not hear you. I

“am wise enough to take warn-
“ing from a friend’s experience,

“and will shun the fantastic ty-
“rant. Can you, who boast your-

“self my friend, wish me to
“reign in indifference which

“constitutes my happiness?”

“Suffer me, my Eliza, to con-
“vince you that the happiness

“you fancy you possess, can only
“be

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“be found in the enlivening trans-
“ports of mutual passion.”

“I fear, Harcourt, it were but
“a dangerous experiment, and I
“must either way be worsted.”

“Why, is it my Eliza’s pride
“to resist the tender dictates of her
“heart?”

“Colonel Harcourt, when I
“meet with a man honest, sen-
“sible, incapable of falsehood, my
“heart shall own its conqueror;
“till then suffer me to enjoy the
“indifference you cannot con-
“demn.”

Why,

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Why, Fanny, must I be teased about a passion I resolve never to experience? These men, my dear, are the veriest tyrants in the world. More cruel than even their own Caligula, they wish our whole sex had but one heart, that they might wound us at a blow. Colonel Harecourt, talk to me again of love, and I will hate you. It is true, my Fanny, he is the most amiable of men; but when they hope to win our favour, do they not all appear so? Fawning when they supplicate our smiles,

tyran -

THE ASSIGNATION. 141

tyrannize when we own their
fway.

Adieu, my dear: believe me
your

Affectionate

ELIZA MONTFORT.

LET

LETTER XX.

Lady Harriet Somner to Miss Lennox.

YOU are mistaken, Maria,
my Ashby is still the man
of honour, still perfectly innocent,
nor can I even blame his incon-
stancy. — To have been beloved
by Sir George Ashby is a glory
I would not barter to reign the un-
rivalled idol of kneeling monarchs,
and

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and the pleasure I experience from that sweet conviction, is infinitely superior to the adulation of the unmeaning crowd.

You are dissatisfied with my last letter. “When I expected,” (say you) “that Lady Harriet would
“have imparted her sorrows to
“her friend, how unkind this
“assumed heroism!” After a friendship begun in infancy, and cemented by the endearing tie of mutual confidence, can my Maria need to be informed that her Harriet sensibly feels afflictions, but
knows

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knows not to complain? —

That I still love Sir George Ashby, is true. Ah, my dear, is it possible to see him, and be insensible of his charms; to feel his merit, and cease to love him? But how vain the boast of that affection, which does not instruct us to prefer the beloved object to ourselves! Could happiness be purchased with one sigh from my Ashby, I would reject the tempting bait.

My brother, yesterday, introduced Lord Frederick Beaumont, a
young

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young nobleman just returned from his travels. This agreeable creature has just wit enough to entertain, and good humour enough to please. He dresses, compliments, and trifles to admiration, possesses an infinite fund of small talk, and is the universal favourite of the ladies. — But when may we expect my brother's friend, this Marquis? “ Ah, Harriet, Harriet, “ does not this impatience betray “ the female?”

Can I, my dear, be unanxious for the arrival of a brother's earliest

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- friend?

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friend? His esteem declares him worthy, and his personal graces, if not exaggerated by the partial praises of friendship, would charm the coldest heart. Maria, what if for once, in my life, I turn match-maker, and give thee to the Marquis? Believe me, I feel myself infinitely more consequential from my newly-acquired office.

The amiable Lucy Montfort is unhappy. So young to taste misfortune! Ah, Maria, what is this boasted sensibility? Who could believe

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lieve that the bitterest sorrows flow from the sweetest spring, and that those tender sentiments which, from a casual survey, one would imagine granted but to receive and confer felicity, should but render us the more susceptible of misery?

— These Lords of the creation, my friend, can make their love subservient to their pride, and their passions move at the command of interest. — More variable than the volatile butterfly,

“ The lawless libertine may rove,

“ Free and uncensured thro’ the wilds of love.”

My Maria, Sir George Ashby, is changed! How true is it that men are “constant only in inconstancy!”

Eliza Montfort is universally admired, and Colonel Harcourt is much with her. I am mistaken if these two flints discover not, by mutual collision, their latent fire.

This agreeable man was, a few years ago, unfortunate in an affair of the heart. His parents died, while he was too young to feel his loss, and left their little Edmond

to an uncle's care. An unincumbered estate, near five hundred a year, defrayed the expences of his education; and, when he returned from making the tour of Europe, he found their family encreased by the company of a beautiful girl, the daughter of an intimate friend. Edmond felt the force of her attractions, nor was his Caroline uninterested in his passion? They vowed to live but for each other, and our friend's behaviour was too particular to escape observation. His uncle discovered

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his attachment, and ordered him, as he valued his favour, to think no longer of her; assured him, he loved him as his son, and that if he married with his approbation, he intended to make him his heir. No interested motives could move the generous Harcourt; but our lovers were obliged to be more circumspect. Soon after this, his aunt died; and Edmond, by his uncle's desire, went immediately after the funeral to settle some affairs in London. He went with more alacrity,

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alacrity, convinced that Caroline intended quitting her friend's house, as her stay was now become highly improper. His business detained him longer than he expected, and three months were nearly elapsed when he received a letter from his uncle, requiring his immediate attendance at H——. Post horses were ordered, and our astonished friend obeyed the hurrying summons. — His wonder was greatly encreased, when he came within his uncle's estate. He was not met, as usual, by the chearful te-

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nants; and, when he passed a rural cottage, the children pointed at the chaise, while the old people, with anxious care, avoided his looks. — He stopped the postilion, and enquired the reason of this concern; but could obtain no answer. — When he approached the house, an air of festivity and joy augmented his surprize. He discovered his adored Caroline, who came out to meet him. Transported at the unexpected pleasure, he threw himself out of the chaise, and would willingly have caught her to his bosom.

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bosom. — Think, Maria, what this tender lover must have felt, when his uncle introduced an aunt, in the person of his beloved mistress!

— Surprise, indignation, and contempt, entirely deprived him of the use of speech, and he suffered himself to be conducted to the house. This stupid calm soon dissipated, and, with returning reason, he beheld Caroline sunk even below reproach. He wished them joy with real composure; and, to convince this faithless wo-

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man his heart must ever act in concert with his judgement; he determined to stay that night, and discovered his contempt by more than common vivacity.—He left H ——— the next morning; and has, since that, foresworn the sex.

Surely, Maria, this man has cause; his fair prospects of fortune blasted thus, and by the woman he loved. What a topic for those who glory to detract from female merit, and ridicule the sex!

Bless

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Bless me, what a letter! — You
will certainly rejoice at the conclu-
sion with your

HARRIET SOMMER.

H 6 LET-

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LETTER XXI.

Miss *Lesley* to Miss *Henrietta Winchester*.

OSNEY DALE.

YES, my *Henrietta*, the measure of my woes is full : and but for the consolation of your tender, your faithful friendship, the grave must, ere this reaches
your

your hand, have received a being which, worn by afflictions, and sunk into the lowest abyss of misfortune, looks to you only for support.

Would I could recount my sorrows to you! But, Henrietta, it is, perhaps, the greatest of my misfortunes that I am ignorant of their source. — Ignorant of their source, did I say? No, my friend, it is an Almighty Being who inflicts these punishments for our good, who sees our errors, and by whose wise ordinations “Man is born to
“ trouble,

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“trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.”

Unconscious of any crime I had committed, I perceived the greatest alteration in Lady Ashby's conduct towards me with astonishment ; and, when I received her orders instantaneously to depart, who can express my anguish ? I had flown to you immediately ; but, discarded with ignominy by Lady Ashby, could I hope your family would receive me ? I accepted Sir George's generous protection, till I could think of some means for my support.

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port. He has placed me in a sweet retreat. Will you excuse the intrusion on your patience, if I try to enliven my letter with some little description of it?

Figure to yourself a small white house, thatched; the walls almost overgrown with jasmine, sweet briar, and honeysuckles. A hill rises gently behind it, and, on one side, the prettiest little wood imaginable. Through a meadow, before the house, interspersed with clumps of trees, a small river winds its way, and loses itself on
one

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superior to mine. — It would
make

“ Hope blossom, in the shades of death.”

Acquitted to herself, approved
by Miss Winchester and Sir George
Ashby, Emilia no longer shall
give way to sorrow. Again shall
her books, her mandolin, and her
embroidery, afford the enjoyment
which they used:

“ And I and malice from this hour are friends.”

Sir George comes to visit me;
he comes in that elegant phaeton
from

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from which, he said he would
show me the most delightful
country in the world. It is a
lovely evening; and I foresee
I shall enjoy my ride ex-
tremely.

Adieu, my Henrietta: I endea-
vour to appear chearful; but a sigh
that forced its way with that adieu,
seems to ask

“ Who can administer to a mind diseased ? ”

Write to me directly, if you
ever loved me. In the midst of
the gay world, surrounded by opu-
lence

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blence and pleasure, by your letters
were always my greatest enjoy-
ment: dejected and despised, in
this lonely solitude, guess how ac-
ceptable they must be to you. I

Adieu, my Henrietta: I endea-
voured to appear cheerful; but a sigh
EMILIA LESLEY.

Write to me directly, if you
ever loved me. In the midst of
the gay world, surrounded by opu-
lence

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LETTER XXII

Miss Montfort to Miss Sedley.

“WHEN does my Eliza
“think of returning to
“Montfort Hall?” Bless me,
child, what a question! Who, dost
thou think would submit to be im-
mured in that Gothic mansion, the
wonders but of stupid clowns, that
can

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can reign the toast of this gay metropolis?

Indeed, Harcourt, thou hast no chance. Even a cockade, supported but by a poor five hundred, will be ineffectual to subdue the haughty Eliza. And yet, my dear, this man is infinitely charming; nature seems to have amply atoned the cruelty of fortune.

O, I forgot. Would you believe it? I think of entertaining the pale of matrimony; and the man — such a man, child! — How kind this early notice! You see I descend

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send from my altitude of power
to warn you country misses. Pre-
pare your batteries ; for, if your
hearts are not impregnable, this
Adonis will be the easy victor.
Let me attempt to describe him.
Now for smiling loves, and Cupid's
whole artillery. — Alas ! my friend,
it will not do ; and I must un-
willingly quit the sublime. This
redoubtable hero then is, in plain
English, tall, thin, silly, and im-
pertinent ; perpetually aiming at
wit, and withall heavier than his
own lead mines.

I have

I have ever considered sense as the native of every soil, a plant that wants but the warm sunshine of favour to unfold its opening blossoms; but this booby, son of a fond father, has staggered my opinion. He possesses an immoderate fortune, and has engaged Lady Beverly as his advocate. Is it possible to hold out against their joint eloquence? Her Ladyship declares that, as it is customary to marry, she thinks I cannot have a better offer, and has promised to provide the wedding dinner, and regulate
 good I the

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the *etiquette* of the day. How fortunate this man, Fanny, to have made a second of the only woman in the world who would not have outshone him!—These monied-men, I imagine, lose a grain of sense for every additional guinea; and so, thanks to kind nature, we are nearly on a par, our intellects being perfectly equivalent to their wealth.

This is a fruitful theme, and numberless reflections crowd to my pen, but they are so obvious your own mind will easily suggest them. One would conclude from this irre-

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mediable stupidity, that the dross, unwilling to be parted from its native ore, inhabits the soul of its possessor, and “those whom God “has joined together, let no man “put asunder.”

Bless me! Matrimony too, and Colonel Harcourt at the door! Ominous, upon my word. Well, if I *must* marry, give me the amiable Edmond, and a knapsack.

In or. I. 1

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In Continuation.

POSITIVELY, Harcourt, I retract. — Lord, my dear, such an affair!

I put my letter in my pocket, and hurried down to the Colonel. He was lively, agreeable, engaging — I had almost said irresistible. At last the creature grew presuming, and insisted on my listening to his tale of love. I ran up to

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fetch my drawings to divert his attention, and was some minutes before I returned. He commended them, and took up a pencil to make some trifling alterations; then looking stedfastly upon me, "Miss Montfort," said he, "have you not lost a paper?"

Think, Fanny, how I was confused, when he drew my letter from his pocket!

"Have you opened it, Colonel Harcourt? — Answer me sincerely."

"Upon

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“ Upon my honour, Madam, I
“ am ignorant of the contents.”

“ Thank Heaven!” said I, raising my hands with transport. My emotion, I suppose, awakened his curiosity. He caught the paper, and swore he would read it. I used my utmost endeavours to prevent him, but in vain.

“ My Eliza, give me your word
“ I am not mentioned, and I will
“ restore it.”

“ Vain wretch !” said I.

What could I do, Fanny? I scorned an absolute falsehood; and

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to let him read it in my presence was shocking. In this dilemma I did the very thing I should have avoided; I ran up stairs, and locked myself into my chamber. A mighty unnecessary precaution though, I found; for the Colonel was not disposed to invade my retirement, and had left the house a few minutes after I went up stairs. This I learnt from Isabella, Lady Beverly's attendant, to whom he gave the letter, sealed up in a blank sheet of paper, with orders to deliver it to me as soon as he was gone.

Fanny,

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Fanny, what shall I do with this man? Surely he will be here this evening — however, I shall not send this till I have seen him.

Twelve o'clock. — No Colonel Harcourt. Ah, my dear, when these men know our partiality, how ready their neglect! But on such a theme it is no merit to excell; when your Eliza wishes to display her wit and ingenuity, she will endeavour to praise the wretches.

Lady Beverly talks of going soon to France to fetch her daughter, who is at the convent of Mar-

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quette. She gives us reason to imagine that nothing but our being in town could induce her to delay her journey. I entreat her not to let us prevent her expedition; but, my dear, it is so very uncustomary for the mistress of a house to leave her visifers, that her Ladyship cannot think of it. — Now could we but persuade her that the Dutches, the Countess, or Lady such-a-one had set the example, believe me, we should hear no more scruples. — This woman would blush at no crime if it could

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could be enrolled in the rules of politeness; and had rather see the world in flames, than infringe one point of ceremony.— But if she goes, the amiable Isabella must accompany her. Fanny, I feel myself greatly interested in the fate of this poor girl. Her person is agreeable; and her face, before it was worn with the traces of sorrow, was doubtless charming. There is a peculiar dignity, a certain elegance about her, which declare her the sport of fortune.— I hinted my suspicions. She blushed,

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and, at my earnest desire, promised me the recital of her misfortunes. As soon as she performs her engagement, I shall impart them to my Fanny, certain that her tender heart feels for afflictions which she never experienced, and that she will join in pitying the mourner, with her

ELIZA MONTFORT.

LET-

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LETTER XXIII.

Augustus Richmond, Esq; to Sir George Ashby

WELL, George, how go you
on? By this time, as happy
as an emperor, I'll warrant me;
and Emilia as kind as — she is
lovely, I suppose you will say. —
I am glad of it, with all my soul;
and when you have a thought to

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spare from her, think on the author of your pleasures. Yes, you sneaking devil, you might have sighed to eternity, had not my divine ingenuity furnished you with expedients. But I will not remind you of what your gratitude must save me the trouble of; therefore I'll treat you with some of my own affairs.

About a mile and a half from this habitation (for the dear creatures here are so solicitous for my stay, that I can't find in my heart to leave them) there stands a snug
little

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little cottage, by the side of a river, where Dick Richardson and I were strolling the other evening, when we were stopped by the sound of the most harmonious wild notes you can imagine. The song we soon distinguished for "What " med'cine can soften the bosom's " keen smart?" A thick hedge divided us from the songstress. I swore I would have one kiss from the lips which breathed such harmonious sounds, and for that purpose began to scale the hedge. Dick, who would not have ran
the

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the risk of scratching his face, or tearing his ruffles for the world, declared, "I was monstrous unpolite to leave the ladies so long;" and, finding me resolute, left me, swearing he wished she might turn out the ugliest devil in the country. But I had good reason for supposing otherwise, my servant having before told me of the most beautiful girl he had ever seen; and I had bent my steps that way purposely to have a view of her. I was soon on the other side the hedge, in a small garden, where
the

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the sweetest syren my eyes had ever beheld, was spinning in a little arbour furrounded by roses and lilies, faint emblems of her beauties.

Alarmed at my appearance, she quitted her employment, and was running towards the house, when I caught her in my arms.

“ Dear creature,” said I, “ take
“ *me* for your Damon, and you
“ shall find me more constant than
“ him you sing of.”

“ Alas! Sir,” said she, “ if
“ sincerity has fled from the vil-
“ lage,

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“I dare, how can we hope the
“seats of opulence should afford
“it?”

I shall not repeat all that was
said; suffice it that, finding her so
astonishingly sensible, nay elegant
in her conversation, I was solici-
tous to learn whence she gained
it, and found the curate of the
parish had instructed her with his
own daughter. But had I opened
a book which lay near her, I had
been no longer at a loss to account
for her purity of thought, or de-
licacy of expression. The most re-
fined

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finest ideas, cloathed in the utmost elegance of language, declared the writings of the inimitable Johnson, her favourite study. — Imagine, George, how bewitching the sublime sentiments of that divine author, familiarized by the softness of feminine sensibility.

In the mean while, Richardson, who was afraid I should ridicule his want of Quixotism, had brought the ladies from the Castle to the farm, where they found me in earnest conversation with Marian. They have been trying ever since
(as

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(as much as they *dare*, though, take notice) to be witty upon the occasion, while I own to you I am little disposed to return their raillery. The girl has made more impression than I could wish upon my heart, and I am convinced her virtue is impregnable. What's to be done? — Oh, for a project worthy of the enterprizing abilities of your

AUGUSTUS RICHMOND.

(as)

L E T.

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LETTER XXIV.

Mrs. Montfort to Mrs. Staley.

I Seize the earliest opportunity to deliver my dear Fanny from suspense. If you have the least desire to be more intimately acquainted with my unfortunate Isabella, you will own yourself obliged to me; but I fear, my friend, I must candidly acknowledge

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ledge a more interested motive. — My amiable girl, help me to dissipate my thoughts, which all point to one center — The ungrateful Harcourt causes me inexpressible uneasiness.

This man, formerly so fond, so constant a visiter, now shuns the house : and if by chance we meet, rudeness is his most flattering conduct. Ah, how much more flattering, than the cutting indifference he frequently assumes ! Is this the man of honour I once depicted ?

“ Alas ! how fall’n, how changed ! ”

Come,

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Come, my poor Isabella, let me
lose my sorrows in pity for thy
sufferings: teach me, from thy
example, to conquer an unfortunate
attachment.

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THE
HISTORY
OF

ISABELLA.

“**I** Obey Miss Montfort’s orders;
may she learn, from the
unfortunate Isabella, that there is no
other road to happiness, but through
the Temple of Virtue.

“ My

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“ My father, in the early part of life, quitted a world incapable of amusing an enlightened mind, or of satisfying a feeling heart. To an understanding naturally refined, and improved by reading, the world had nothing to offer, but a constant succession of the same tiresome ceremonies, the same unentertaining pleasures. He saw those talents that were bestowed for the noblest ends, employed for the basest purposes, and beheld, with regret, that beauty, which was once the sweetest reward

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reward of heroes, poets, and philosophers,

"Now gaily blunts on fops its fatal dart,

"Nor claims the triumph of a letter'd heart."

"Disgusted at high life, he quitted the brilliant scene without regret, and sought variety in solitude. Happily for him, Mrs. Raymond and her agreeable daughter, who lived about a mile distant, prevented his perceiving that the discontented carry within themselves the source of their uneasiness.

— Why, Miss Montfort, do the under-

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understanding and the heart lie so distant, and the dictates of the one so seldom regulate the feelings of the other?—My father's heart confessed Miss Raymond's charms, but "the world's dread laugh," determined him to set in competition with his happiness, that censure he so lately despised.

"Mrs. Raymond was the widow of an officer, who had often signalized his courage in the field; and, thinking with Cæsar, that "It were better to suffer death once, than always to live in fear of it," with

the most heroic valour lost his life, in bravely defending his country. Himself, his lovely partner, and their prattling offspring, had long subsisted on his pay. This tender husband feared his death would overwhelm the heart which poverty could never wound. The thought of his Isabella's pangs was the only tie that kept him from the skies, and her lovely image quitted his faithful heart, but with the expiring sigh.

“ As soon as Mrs. Raymond recovered her loss, accompanied by her

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her daughter, and with no other provision than her pension, she retired to L ———; and, solicitous for her Charlotte's happiness, employed her utmost care "to rear the
"tender thought."

"Miss Raymond was about eighteen when my father settled at L ———, agreeable in her person, lively, and engaging. He approached her with indifference; but found it impossible to quit her without regret. Though far from a regular beauty, she had that

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inexpressible *je ne sçai quoi* that is infinitely more attractive.

He tried every method to drive her idea from his mind; but, finding it as impossible as it was to refrain from visiting her, he resolved to make the tour of Europe. He was two years in travelling, but not meeting that satisfaction he promised himself, and convinced, by experience, that absence but endears the object of our affections, immediately after his arrival in London, he set out for L ———, and wondering
he

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he had so long rejected a happiness that courted his acceptance, received his Isabella from the hands of a delighted mother.

“ My birth was but a prelude to my future miseries, and deprived my father of the best of wives. Perhaps that was the reason why I possessed so little of his affection.

“ I was put out to nurse, for my presence redoubled his concern, as he looked upon me as the source of all his misfortunes.

“ Mrs. Raymond, soon after, desired permission to take the care

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of her little grand-daughter, a request readily complied with.

“ While under her friendly care, health, peace, and innocence led on each smiling hour; but, ere I was twelve years old, I lost the guide of my unexperienced years, this tender instructress.

“ My father took me to his house. The most trifling instances of his affection effaced the remembrance of this more than mother; and, in his growing fondness, I forgot my sorrow. — But it is needless, Madam, to trouble you with

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with those juvenile incidents which afforded nothing either new or entertaining: it will be sufficient to inform you that, at seventeen, I found myself furrounded with every elegance that can enliven pleasure, and the undoubted heiress of immense wealth. The men confessed they thought me amiable, while a crowd of coxcombs paid homage to my charms, and declared my cruelty drove them to despair. These men, Miss Montfort, swear they die by our frowns, but where is the willow

1157

K 4

that

that can bear testimony to the truth of their assertions?

“ My father was seldom at home: his companions engrossed his whole time. Left entirely to myself, and of a lively disposition, my gaities were unbounded. Amusement, pleasure, dress, and dissipation, left no time for more serious avocations. The men endeavoured to inspire me with love, but found I laughed at their pretensions, and ridiculed their vows. — Happy, Madam, had I maintained my opinion, and
still

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still preserved that insensibility ! The woman who parts with it must be miserable.

“ Mr. Osney, second son to the Earl of ———, was destined to convince me that the blind deity reigns with unlimited power. To a person, the perfect model of manly elegance, nature, as if ambitious to excel herself, had joined the most faultless features. An aquiline nose, a good complexion, light blue eyes, the most expressive imaginable, and a mouth which, dressed in smiles, rendered him infinitely charming.

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Alas ! Miss, Monfort, too late I
found

“ The gods concealed the little mind,

“ And earthly thought, beneath a heavenly face,

“ Forgot the worth that dignifies mankind,

“ To smoothe and polish every outward grace.”

“ By frequenting all public
places, we had many opportunities
of meeting, and he acknowledged
my wit ensured the heart my beauty
conquered. His conversation was
refined, polite, elegant, spirited, and
sometimes sentimental. His know-
ledge was universal, he was master
of every subject, and discussed each
topic

topic with astonishing facility. Ah, Madam, the extent of his understanding had but contracted the sentiments of his heart.

“ My father one morning sent for me to his closet. I was much surprized at a message so unusual, and immediately obeyed the summons.

“ Isabella, said he, I have just received a letter from the Earl of ———, who proposes a match between you, and Mr. Osney his second son. An offer so advantageous must not be refused; par-

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ticularly as his Lordship intends to give up an estate to his son, upon the alliance, which will enable him to settle very handsomely upon you; and your father, my Isabella, does not possess that fortune he is reputed to have. Dispose yourself to prove, by a ready compliance with my commands, that you have a proper sense of the parental affection I have always shewn you. — What say you, Isabella, are you ready to oblige me?

“I hesitated, I was confused, and ashamed to acknowledge my

ac-

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acquaintance with, and affection for, Mr. Osney. I assured him his command should be his daughter's law, and his will regulate her inclination. My father appeared perfectly content, and I had the satisfaction to see a glow of pleasure animate that countenance which had been so long obscured by melancholy.

“ Our house was now the abode of harmony, peace, and pleasure. Mr. Osney's attentions were, if possible, augmented; and, eagerly solicitous for what he termed his
hap-

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happiness, he pressed my father to name the day that was to complete it.

“ My dear Miss Montfort, how happy your Isabella in those halcyon days of innocence, when every new occurrence brought additional felicity, and hope gaily smiled upon futurity!

“ The most unfortunate accident interrupted this golden dream of bliss. My father frequented the gaming table; and though his fortune had received many shocks, he still flattered himself the next throw would

would reinstate him in his former affluence.

“He had this day dined with a large company, and his own spirits were exhilarated by foreign aid. In the beginning of the evening, fortune seemed to smile on his projects, and the dice were propitious. Encouraged by this success, he ventured larger sums, nor found the inconsistency of the fickle goddess, till it was too late to retract. Still, however, he hoped another change, nor could believe himself deceived, till he was convinced his wealth was
vanished,

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vanished, his lands mortgaged, and that he had nothing more to bett.

“He returned home almost distracted, confessed his disappointment, and wept for his Isabella.—I begged him to be comforted; assured him, the misfortune, if he regained his cheerfulness, was trifling, but if augmented by his sorrows, must for ever destroy his daughter’s peace; that it would be Mr. Osney’s pride to protect his father, and our happiness would suffer no interruption.

“Ah, my child, said he, there is
the

the stroke that wounds me. Your exalted mind cannot comprehend the meanness another may practise. Mr. Osnay's family will scorn to connect themselves with the daughter of a ruined gamester; and my Isabella may prove the innocent victim of a father's folly.

“ My dear Sir, you know not Mr. Osnay, or you could not harbour a suspicion of his honour. Noble, generous, disinterested; to him sorrow never mourned unalleviated, nor want held the supplicating hand in vain. Can such
a man

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a man change with the smiles of fortune, or reject the worth he loves?

“My father shook his head, but unwilling to destroy the pleasing delusion, seemed to coincide with my opinion, and we parted for that night.

“Mr. Osney's behaviour, the next day, confirmed my opinion of his honour; and as he did not mention my father's misfortunes, we were silent on that topic.

“He visited for some days as usual, but methought his affection seemed

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seemed less fervent, his intreaties less importunate, and his visits shorter than before. At last he totally absented himself for three days. Imagine my anxiety! Yet still confiding in his generosity, I attributed his negligence to some unforeseen accident. Every knock at the door alarmed me, I expected this faithless lover, and was repeatedly disappointed. — Trembling for a lover's safety, and obliged to hide my concern, lest it should affect a father's peace, what a situation was mine! I was at last happily

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pily released from it by the following
billet :

“ M Y Isabella, how severe
“ those arbitrary commands, which
“ oblige me to refrain from visiting
“ the woman I adore ; to sigh un-
“ pitied, nor once inform her of
“ my sufferings ! — The Earl has
“ heard your father’s ill success, and
“ expects his son to sacrifice to the
“ trifling consideration of superior
“ fortune, the happiness of his life :
“ but the lady he has chosen, shall
“ never dispute my Isabella’s title to
“ my heart. I shall be this evening
“ at

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“ at Mrs. M — ’s, may I flatter

“ myself you will meet me there?

“ Come, my love, oblige with

“ your presence the man who

“ knows not to be ungrateful.

“ Allow him once more to breathe

“ the sincerest vows at your feet,

“ and to assure you that he is

“ unalterably yours.

“ OSNAY.”

“ This billet restored serenity to
my agitated bosom. I had not
courage to shew it to my father,
lest he should prevent our meeting
in

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in the evening. I had recourse to artifice ; and by pretending business with Mrs. M —, for the first time in my life, practised disguise.

“ I found Mr. Osney had been there long before me. He received me with transport ; swore that no change of circumstance should diminish his affection, nor even a father's commands oblige him to desert his Isabella. He proposed a private marriage ; but, finding me averse to it, dropped the design. In short, my dear Miss Montfort, imagine all the tender things a heart
in

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in love could dictate, and you may conceive Mr. Osnay's professions. He would not suffer me to depart, till he had obtained my promise to meet him there on the day following.

“From my example, let all young women avoid the first false step, nor think, that prudence once silenced will ever resume her admonitions.

“New to disguise, I took such pains to deceive my father, he easily penetrated my over-acted precautions, and asked if I had seen Mr.
Osnay.

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Ofnay. I scorned an actual falsity, acknowledged I had just parted from him, and put his letter in my father's hands.

“ My Isabella, said he, let us not shew by the meanness of our conduct that we merit the misfortunes we sustain. Is it not better to suffer by a father's rashness, than by your own imprudence? Scorn to be the wife of a man, who fears to own you publickly, and who, only solicitous for himself, will sacrifice your happiness to his own convenience.

“ Indeed,

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“ Indeed, Sir, you wrong Mr. Osney. I am convinced his love for me is more fervent than ever; but the Earl, unbiaſſed by paſſion, has choſen a lady of ſuperior fortune, and inſiſts upon his ſon’s compliance.

“ And can my Iſabella connect herſelf with a family that deſpiſe her? I am convinced, her more unprejudiced thoughts will diſdain the degrading ſuſpicion. She will remember, that the “ Love of a
“ woman of ſenſe and virtue, does
“ honour to a monarch,” and ſcorn

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to accept Mr. Osnay's hand, unsanctified by parental approbation.

But if honour pleads in vain, Isabella, be not deaf to the calls of interest. Mr. Osnay is entirely

dependant on his father, and marrying contrary to his express commands, he can expect but a bare subsistence from his bounty; and it

were far better, my Isabella,

"Not do the deed, than weep it done."

"Happy, Miss Montfort, had I thought with my father; but this passion seemed to have debased every

sen-

sentiment of my soul. Mr. Osnay assured me that after we were married the Earl would be readily induced to forgive; and by a short time absenting myself from Mrs. M—'s I imagined I had sufficiently sacrificed to honour. I resolved to keep my appointments from my father's knowledge, and since I informed Mr. Osnay of my secrecy, his letters were more frequent, his intreaties for a private marriage more urgent. Ah, Madam, in my serious moments, I abhorred my dissimulation, but ten thousand pleas tended to si-

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lence the reproaches of conscience; and, by marrying Mr. Osney, I hoped to support my father in his former affluence.

“ This idea, which could have induced me to rush on misery with transport, was of infinite force, when it tended to sanctify the soft inclinations of the heart. I agreed to go with him to the altar; upon his promising that I should live with my father till happier times justified his claim. This agreement seemed to reconcile my affection for Mr. Osney, with my duty to a parent,

and

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and with the most astonishing unconcern, I prepared for the important day.

“ I went early in the morning to Mrs. M — ’s, where I met Mr. Osney, who had already prepared a clergyman. Unfortunately Mrs. M — was obliged to attend one of her best customers, who had just sent for her. She refused to go, but I insisted upon her not hazarding the loss of the lady’s favour for my sake. We had, therefore, no other witness than a friend of Mr. Osney’s, who gave him, what

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he politely termed, an invaluable treasure.

“ The ceremony was just completed, when we were surprized by a violent noise at the door. Mr. Osney begged me not to be alarmed, since it could be no other than some visitors to Mrs. M——. But, my dear Miss Montfort, judge of my emotion, when my father, pale, frantic, disordered, rushed into the room !

“ I had just life enough to hear him declare I was no longer his daughter, to hear this offended parent

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rent solemnly renounce me, and sunk senseless on the floor.

“ When I regained my reason, I found myself on a couch, and Mr. Osney kneeling by my side. I enquired for my father, but was told he left the room soon after I fainted away. I ordered a chair, and insisted that Mr. Osney should keep his promise inviolate. He complied more readily than I could have expected, and I set out for that peaceful haven I so lately quitted, but found the doors barred against me. The servants told me, with tears in

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their eyes, their master ordered them, on pain of his eternal displeasure, to refuse me admittance; but assured me that, could they be of service to me, they should consider the loss of their place as trifling. Doubtful, uncertain what to do, I hesitated, when Mr. Osney came up to the chair.

“My Habella, said he, had you then rather sustain a father’s rage, than trust the husband who adores you? Your returning, contrary to his positive injunctions, will but the more exasperate him. Suffer me,
my

my love, to conduct you to your own house. Time will, doubtless, soften a father's heart; and dispose it to receive his daughter.

“My father's anger appeared to me unreasonable. I had married a man infinitely my superior; and though without the Earl's approbation, yet I doubted not, but through his partiality for a much loved son, he might be induced to approve his choice.

“Mr. Ofnay conducted me to a genteel ready-furnished lodging, and endeavoured, with the utmost ten-

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derness, to dissipate my chagrin. Ah, Miss Montfort, too giddy to reflect, too insensible to feel for another, I easily forgot a parent's sufferings: and if, in Mr. Osney's absence, an uneasy thought obtruded, I dispelled it by recollecting the rectitude of my motives, and willing at all events to enjoy the sweets of self-esteem, condemned my father's pride, and the too rigid principles of honour, to which he calmly sacrificed the peaceful joys of domestic happiness.

“ At my husband's desire I cultivated

tivated no acquaintance, nor was I visited by any one. His company, ever new, and ever agreeable, rendered all other insipid; nor had I an idea of any pleasure superior to the charms of his conversation. Indeed, Miss Montfort, it is impossible to paint my felicity; I should but shock you with the ill-drawn likeness. The pleasing dream still presents itself to my imagination, arrayed in all the spotless purity of perfect innocence. Ah, Madam, suffer me to draw a veil over futurity, nor awaken the sorrows of a bleeding heart.

heart. — But your desire shall be complied with. Can you, Madam, still honour with your esteem, the woman who has forfeited her own, nor has another claim to the blessing she requests, but that she is unfortunate, and that it is Miss Montfort's glory to succour the distressed, and by her regard fully overpay the cruelty of an ill-judging world?

“Mr. Osnay's love seemed unabated; and had my father's consent sanctified my happiness, it had anticipated the joys of heaven. — Ah, Madam, how sweet the flattering deception!

“The

“The Earl and his family came to town for the winter, and Mr. Osney was consequently less with me than formerly: yet he appeared to mourn our frequent separation, and shared in the anxiety his absence occasioned me.

“I passed some weeks, still satisfied with my husband, yet I thought his visits to the Earl much longer, and his too sedulous attention inconsistent with what he owed his wife.

“He was obliged to accompany his family in an expedition for a few days, but was absent longer than he

pro-

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proposed. In time his excursions became so frequent, that I ventured gently to remonstrate. He was enraged, swore he would not rein his pleasures to procure the happiness of a peevish, ungrateful beauty, nor maintain a constancy returned but with reproach.

“ In vain I endeavoured to pacify him: this husband, so much beloved, so gentle, so engaging, was deaf to my entreaties; and, notwithstanding my efforts to detain him, quitted the house, declaring he would never see me more. — I blamed myself for

irri-

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irritating a temper unused to restraint, but considered his anger merely temporary, and doubted not but that in a short time I should see a repentant husband at my feet.

“ Some time, however, passed, and I heard nothing of him. I began, indeed, to be alarmed, and sent my maid to the Earl's to ask if Mr. Osney was in town. I waited her return with the most anxious impatience. She brought word, that the house was in the utmost confusion; and when she enquired whether Mr. Osney was in town, the
servants

servants laughed at the question.

“What could I think of this account? I knew my husband’s temper was violent, but I thought him incapable of resenting an injury, he no longer felt, and was certain my submissions, even supposing I offended, had amply atoned the fault. That he should have purposely picked a quarrel, merely as an excuse to absent himself from me, was what my pride would not suffer me to believe, how then could he be in London, and yet avoid his Isabella?

To

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To release myself from these mortifying reflections, I called for the news-paper. Ah, Miss Montfort, think what I suffered when the first paragraph I read confirmed Mr. Osnay's infidelity, and informed the public, "Yesterday was married, at " St. James's church, the Honourable " Mr. Osnay, second son to the " Earl of —, to Lady Mary Fitzgerald."

" I could read no further, the paper dropped from my trembling hand, and I sunk lifeless in Betty's arms. As soon as I recovered, I
sent

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sent her once more to the Earl's, and insisted on her not returning till she had seen Mr. Osnay. — May you, Madam, never experience, even in idea, the pangs I then endured. I knew myself his wife, and resolved no longer to disguise it, but assert my prior claim.

“ Betty returned. She had not been long at the Earl's before a carriage stopped at the door, and Mr. Osnay handed out his bride.

“ This faithful girl took care to place herself where they were inevitably obliged to pass. Mr. Osnay
started

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started at the sight of her, dropped Lady Mary's hand, and, conducting her to a room, immediately returned to Betty, and reprimanded her for daring to intrude and observe his conduct. She represented my situation, and with artless eloquence painted my love and sufferings. He appeared affected with the melancholy recital, and putting some gold into her hand, "Tell my Isabella," said he, "she has still a lover;" and hurried from her.

"The servants confirmed the truth of his marriage; and yet, still

con-

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confiding in this dear perfidious, I could not credit the account. My heart bore testimony to his innocence, while my deluded understanding realized impossibilities, and confirmed the sweet illusion. Ah, Madam, this cruel destroyer of my happiness, envious even of the little I possessed, by the following billet confirmed his falshood, and reduced me to the painful necessity of tearing his faithless image from my heart, and with it each cheerful prospect of felicity.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



